

THE NORTH AMERICAN

FILIPINO STAR

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Montreal's only Filipino-Canadian newspaper

FIFA draw selects joint hosts for 2026



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, President Donald Trump, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, hold up country names during the draw for the 2026 soccer World Cup at the Kennedy Center in Washington on Friday, Dec.5, 2025.

The leaders of the US, Mexico and Canada took the stage for the 2026 World Cup draw, even as trade tensions simmered in the background. For Donald Trump, the brief inter-action marked his first meeting with Mexico's Claudia Sheinbaum, who leads the

largest trading partner for the US. While Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has already met with Trump several times, trade talks have been halted due to the TV ad by Ontario's Minister Doug Ford.

See Page 4

FIFA draw

Challenges facing Ottawa-Alberta pipeline deal



Prime Minister Mark Carney, right, signs an MOU with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith in Calgary, Alta., Thursday, Nov. 27, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jeff McIntosh

The Alberta-Ottawa pipeline agreement signed on November 27, 2025, sets a framework to potentially build a new, privately-financed pipeline to the B.C. coast. The agreement is an initial step, facing significant political and legal challenges, primarily from B.C. and First Nations, but offers

substantial economic opportunities if realized.

The immediate next steps involve detailed planning and consultation. Alberta is tasked with submitting a formal pipeline appli-

See Page 4

Challenges facing

Remembering the 14 women massacred 36 years ago



Choir Les Croches sing in Montreal on Dec. 6, 2025 to honour the 14 women killed in the 1989 École Polytechnique shooting. (Johanie Bouffard, CityNews) See news report on page 16 - Montreal remembers

Family physicians reach tentative deal with Quebec over Bill 2



Dr. Marc-André Amyot, the head of the FMOQ, left, and Christian Dubé, the province's health minister. The two sides announced a tentative agreement Thursday on Bill 2. (Sylvain Roy Roussel/CBC) See P. 17 Quebec family doctors voting on new deal after province backtracks on reforms

Maligayang Pasko

Happy Holidays

Joyeux Noël

Merry Christmas



Stephanie Valenzuela
Mairesse d'arrondissement
Borough Mayor
stephanie.valenzuela@montreal.ca



Sonny Moroz
Conseiller de Ville
City Councillor
District Snowdon
sonny.moroz@montreal.ca



Milany Thiagarajah
Conseillère de Ville
City Councillor
District Darlington
milany.thiagarajah@montreal.ca

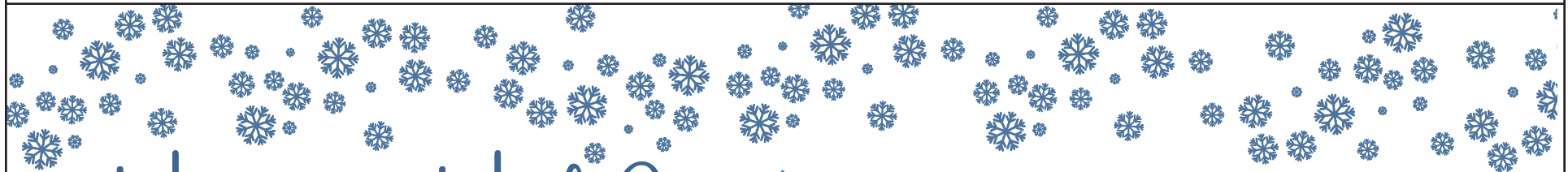


Alexandre Teodoresco
Conseiller de Ville
City Councillor
District Loyola
alexandre.teodoresco@montreal.ca

Que la paix et la prospérité vous accompagnent en 2026



510, boulevard Décarie Bureau 600, Montréal (Québec) H3X 2H5



Happy Holidays



We hope you and your family spend quality time together with good food and great friends !



Michelle Setlakwe
MNA for Mont-Royal-Outremont
Official Opposition House Leader
Michelle.Setlakwe.MROU@assnat.qc.ca
(514) 341-1151



Elisabeth Prass
MNA for D'Arcy-McGee
Elisabeth.Prass.DMG@assnat.qc.ca
(514) 488-7028




Linda Caron
MNA for La Pinière
Linda.Caron.LAPI@assnat.qc.ca
(450) 678-0611



Brigitte B. Garceau
MNA for Robert-Baldwin
Brigitte.Garceau.ROBA@assnat.qc.ca
(514) 684-9000





FROM THE PUBLISHER'S
DESK

Reflections on the
values and
meanings of holiday
celebrations

Zenaida Kharroubi

Celebrating the holidays is often linked to cultural traditions. During this time of the year, everyone is thinking of where and how to enjoy a special occasion to re-connect, or to take a break, even for a moment, from the harsh realities of daily living that may be full of responsibilities, challenges and uncertainties.

The most interesting aspect of learning about end-of-the-year cultural traditions is often the discovery of universal human themes—such as hope, renewal, light conquering darkness, and community connection—expressed through a stunning variety of unique and symbolic practices. Understanding how these traditions serve to strengthen social bonds, reinforce cultural identity, and connect generations within a community, often emphasizing the importance of shared experiences and collective memory which help us broaden our perspective. Tracing the historical roots of traditions, some of which blend ancient seasonal festivals (like winter solstice celebrations) with modern religious or secular observances, like Christmas or Hannukah, reveal fascinating stories of cultural exchange and adaptation over centuries

Food is central to most celebrations, and discovering the specific dishes and their meanings is fascinating. For instance, the Italian-American Feast of the Seven Fishes is a Christmas Eve dinner featuring multiple seafood dishes, with "seven" being a symbolic number. Originating from Southern Italian tradition, this "Vigil" meal abstains from meat and includes a variety of fish and seafood, such as cod, calamari, shrimp, and shellfish. The Japanese tradition of eating toshikoshi soba on New Year's Eve involves eating buckwheat noodles to symbolize and welcome a year of good fortune, longevity, and resilience. The long noodles represent a long life, while the ease with which they can be cut signifies cleanly breaking away from the hardships of the past year. Historically, the tradition may have also been linked to prosperity, as goldsmiths used soba flour to gather gold dust. The Scandinavian risalamande is a Danish Christmas dessert made from rice pudding, whipped cream, chopped almonds, and vanilla, served cold and topped with a hot cherry sauce. A key tradition is hiding a whole almond in the dish; the person who finds it receives a small gift. In Philippine folklore, it is believed that cooking something that floats (palitaw) for New Year will bring good luck and success. Instead of turkey, most Filipinos serve lechon (roast pig) and hamon (ham) with gouda cheese during the holidays.

The shared emphasis on gathering, forgiveness, and community well-being transcends geographical boundaries. Seeing how different cultures prioritize human connection at year's end highlights a common thread of valuing relationships and shared future. New Year's eve parties which

are commonly held by any group anywhere is a very common example of celebrating the end of the year and welcoming a new one full of hopes for a better future, characterized by making New Year resolutions which are rarely kept but serve as a good attempt to make changes in one's life.

Many traditions incorporate unique folklore characters or rituals aimed at fortune-telling or warding off evil spirits. From the Welsh Mari Lwyd (a skeletal horse figure visiting homes) to the Spanish Las Doce Uvas de la Suerte (eating twelve grapes for luck), these unique, sometimes quirky, practices are often the most memorable to learn about.

By bringing people together for a shared experience, holding family reunions and social gatherings strengthen a sense of community, unity, and belonging. The collective rituals and celebrations create intense social connections, reinforcing ties within families, friends, and larger societal groups. Moreover, these events have become the most effective way of passing cultural values from one generation to the next. They act as living museums of a society's most cherished beliefs and customs.

Ultimately, whether they are deeply sacred religious rituals or secular artistic gatherings, social events allow people to connect with their past, celebrate the present, and collectively look toward the future.

May the New Year bring us a brighter future - good health, a clearer mind, and an increased vitality to move on forward to achieve both our personal and professional goals.

Let us be grateful for all the blessings received and pray for peace on earth and goodwill to all humanity.

A Syrian Muslim recognized a hero in Bondi Beach, Australia



New South Wales Premier Chris Minns, left, shared a photo on X of him visiting Ahmed al-Ahmed in hospital. Al-Ahmed was identified as the bystander who hid behind parked cars and seized a rifle from one of the gunmen during the deadly shooting at Bondi Beach on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025 (ChrisMinnsMP/X via Reuters)

Fifteen people have been confirmed dead after a shooting targeting a Jewish community Hanukkah event at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Sunday 18:47 local time -

Twenty-five people remain in hospital, six in a critical condition, and four others in a critical but stable condition, authorities say

The two gunmen were father and son, named by local media as Sajid Akram, 50, and his son Naveed, 24 - the father died at the scene, the son was injured and is also in hospital -

The Australian prime minister has called it an "antisemitic terrorism incident" and pledged stricter gun controls

A bystander - 43-year-old Ahmed al Ahmed - managed to tackle and disarm one gunman - he has been praised for his actions and more than A\$1 million has been raised for him.

With files from BBC News

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Fely Rosales Cariño
Society Editor
Community News

Joy Rosales
Administrative Asst.

John Leo Lete
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Bert Abiera (R.I.P.)
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Nov.1982-Nov. 97

**The North American
Filipino Star**
7159, ch. de la Cote des Neiges
Montreal, QC H3R 2M2
Tel.: 514-485-7861

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi
Chief Editor
President & Executive Publisher
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Contributing Writers
Tony San Juan
Toronto News
Jennifer Ellson
Montreal, QC
Albert Maganaka
McGill University
Sam Kevin
Show Biz News & Layout Editor

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From Page 1 FIFA draw

The tournament will run from June 11 to July 19, 2026. It will be the first World Cup to feature an expanded format of 48 teams playing a total of 104 matches.

Sixteen cities across the three nations will host games: 11 in the U.S. (78 matches), 3 in Mexico (13 matches), and 2 in Canada (13 matches).

Vancouver gets down to details as it prepares to welcome the world after the FIFA draw

The lead of Vancouver's host committee for the 2026 FIFA World Cup says now that the draw for the tournament is complete, officials can turn to refining safety, security, staffing and traffic plans for what she called the largest-ever sporting event.

The city will be ready to host the world in 185 days when the tournament spanning three countries and 16 cities kicks off, Jessie Adcock said Monday.

As co-host of the 2026 FIFA World Cup™ with the U.S. and Mexico, Canada will welcome teams and fans to Toronto and Vancouver from June 11 - July 19, 2026. Visitors from countries including Germany, Ghana, Croatia, Australia, and Qatar are encouraged to apply early for visas or eTAs to avoid delays, having a match ticket isn't enough to enter Canada.

Hosting the tournament is



Egypt's Mo Salah applauds the crowd after the World Cup qualifying match against Ethiopia in Cairo on Sept. 5. A match between Egypt and New Zealand is among seven World Cup games that Vancouver will host following Friday's draw and Saturday's release of the full schedule. (Khalid Elfiqi/The Associated Press)

expected to create nearly 25,000 jobs and boost Canada's economy by \$2 billion, while showcasing our culture and hospitality to the world.

Foreign nationals in Vancouver and Toronto are buzzing with excitement as the cities gear up to host a slate of national teams as part of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.

The full schedule of the expanded 48-team, 104-game tournament was announced Saturday in Washington D.C. Canada is staging 13 games, seven in Vancouver and six in Toronto.

In Vancouver, Hany Elheniedy says soccer flows through the blood of

Egyptians and he cannot wait for June 21, 2026, when Vancouver's B.C. Place hosts Egypt and New Zealand as part of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.

The match between the Pharaohs, as the Egyptians are known, and the All-White, as New Zealand's team is known, is among seven games, including two knockout matches, that Vancouver will host following Friday's draw and Saturday's release of the full schedule.

Belgium, Germany and Croatia to play group matches in Canada at 2026 World Cup Elheniedy, who is president of the Egyptian Canadian Cultural Society of B.C.,

and GDP contribution for all levels of government.

Broader Energy Agreement: The pipeline is part of a larger energy MOU which includes federal support for Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) projects, nuclear technology, and the development of AI

says he expects that the team focused around legendary Liverpool forward Mo Salah to generate a "big buzz" in Greater Vancouver and its Egyptian community of some 5,000.

Elheniedy has already purchased tickets for Egypt's two other group-stage matches in nearby Seattle, Wash., against Belgium and Iran. He says it will be "very easy to fill" half of B.C. Place with Egyptian fans from inside and outside of B.C.

B.C. Place will host Canada's men's national soccer team on June 18 against Qatar, and on June 24 against Switzerland following Canada's opening match in Toronto on June 12 against an opponent from Europe, possibly Italy.

The first game to be played at B.C. Place will be on June 13, when Australia plays against an opponent from Europe, which is yet to be determined.

Fans in Vancouver will also have a chance to see New Zealand for a second time on June 26 in its match up against Belgium and its superstar Kevin de Bruyne.

Opponents for the two knockout matches coming to B.C. Place remain to be determined.

With files from various sources including CBC news report by Wolfgang Depner, Cassidy McMackon posted Dec. 6, 2025, James Robson · The Associated Press · Posted: Dec 11, 2025

the November 2025 Alberta-Ottawa Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), particularly regarding its implementation, environmental impact, and legal/political hurdles.

Latest news update:

BC Premier Eby has been critical of the MOU, and previously said it was "unacceptable" his province was excluded from talks.

The premier told reporters Wednesday (Dec. 17) he hasn't spoken further with Alberta or Ottawa about the MOU, but is working to get a date in the new year "to sit down at the table together" and look to "find some common ground."

Eby says he will share his opinion on the MOU at that future meeting "and the fact that obviously British Columbia wasn't at the table, and the issues the agreement raises with us, especially around methane regulations."

When CTV News asked if Eby plans to raise the MOU during Thursday's first ministers meeting, his office only said he "looks forward to discussing B.C.'s leadership role in Major Projects."

Eby told reporters he had a "productive discussion" with the Major Projects office in a meeting Wednesday, and believes B.C. is well positioned "to be the economic engine" of Canada's economy going forward.

Eby also plans to ask Ottawa "to live up to their previous commitments to invest in flood mitigations infrastructure for the Fraser

From Page 1 Challenges facing

cation to the federal Major Projects Office by July 1, 2026. The goal is to have "shovels in the ground" by 2029. Trans Mountain is Complete: A separate project, the federally-owned Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion, became fully operational in May 2024, tripling capacity on its existing route to the B.C. south coast and is delivering oil to markets. The new MOU relates to a separate, future pipeline, possibly to the northern B.C. coast.

Challenges

Indigenous Opposition: A major challenge is the strong opposition from many First Nations groups, particularly in B.C., who state there was "zero consultation" on the MOU and have vowed legal action. The Assembly of First Nations has unanimously demanded the deal's withdrawal.

British Columbia's Stance: The B.C. government was not involved in negotiating the bilateral deal and is opposed to the prospect of a new pipeline or an adjustment to the existing northern B.C. oil tanker ban, arguing the federal government is overstepping its bounds.

Political and Legal Hurdles: The agreement is controversial and a political wedge issue. The federal Liberals recently voted against a Conservative motion to formally endorse the plan, highlighting internal party divisions and a lack of unified political support. Any project will likely face renewed legal challenges, similar to those that delayed the Trans Mountain expansion for years.

Regulatory Uncertainty: While the MOU aims for regulatory certainty (e.g., potential exemptions from certain federal environmental laws), the pushback from B.C. and Indigenous groups suggests a lengthy and complex regulatory process ahead.



An image supplied by Prime Minister Mark Carney's office shows Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, left, and Carney, right, with their respective entourages during a meeting in Saskatoon on June 1, 2025. Daniel Pereira/PMO

Opportunities

Market Diversification: The primary opportunity is to access new global markets (especially in Asia), reducing Canada's reliance on the U.S. as its sole customer and securing a better price for Canadian oil.

Economic Growth: The project promises significant economic benefits, including billions in new investment for power generation, thousands of jobs during construction, and increased tax revenues

data centres in Alberta, positioning the province as a global energy and tech hub.

Indigenous Partnership Model: The MOU emphasizes the potential for Indigenous co-ownership and shared economic benefits, a model that could create new pathways for reconciliation and shared prosperity if implemented successfully with meaningful consultation.

Observers have highlighted several significant challenges facing



John Leo Lete
Local Journalism Initiative
National Ethnic Press & Media Council
of Canada

(Montreal, Quebec) In a relief for daily commuters, authorities reopened an additional traffic lane on the Île aux Tourtes Bridge (Highway 40), helping ease congestion west of the Island. Meanwhile, the Louis Hippolyte La Fontaine Tunnel (Highway 25), a key corridor connecting Montréal and the South Shore, remains partially closed — prolonging alternate route pressures for many drivers.

What's Changed: Île aux Tourtes Bridge Reopens a Lane

As of 15 September 2025, the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility has re established full dynamic lane management on the Île aux Tourtes Bridge, restoring a fifth lane on the structure.

With the new configuration, three of the five lanes are assigned according to peak hour traffic:

Early return of Ile-aux-Tourtes Bridge eases traffic while La Fontaine Tunnel stays shut

enhancing flow either toward Montréal (overnight/early morning) or toward Vaudreuil Dorion (afternoons, weekends, holidays).

Officials say that the move should significantly relieve congestion that has plagued the western corridor for months as repair work advances. For many drivers commuting between Vaudreuil Dorion, Île Perrot, or Senneville and the Island, that extra lane offers more capacity, and some welcomed breathing room.

What Remains: La Fontaine Tunnel Still Under Construction

The Louis Hippolyte La Fontaine Tunnel remains in a long term overhaul begun in 2022 and scheduled to wrap up in 2026. Since October 2022, only three of six lanes have been usable one toward the South Shore and two toward Montréal, creating regular backups for motorists.

As of late 2025, the tunnel continues to occasionally close overnight or on weekends for maintenance, including work on electrical and communication systems, and interchange reconfiguration.

Among the implications: height clearance restrictions (4.3 m) remain in effect, limiting passage for taller vehicles, and transit users are encouraged to check services before travelling.

What This Means for Commuters Right Now

For drivers coming from



Traffic flows more smoothly on the Île aux Tourtes Bridge following the early reopening of an additional lane, while drivers continue to face delays due to the ongoing closure of the La Fontaine Tunnel. Photo from Facebook page Maintien et reconstruction du pont de l'Île-aux-Tourtes

Montreal's West Island or off island suburbs heading west, the reopened lane on the Île aux Tourtes Bridge should shorten rush hour travel times and reduce backups.

However, traffic to/from the South Shore remains constrained because of La Fontaine Tunnel's reduced capacity and intermittent closures. where possible, checking real time conditions (e.g. via Québec 511),

and allowing extra time for any potential detours near the tunnel.

Longer Term Outlook: Projects Continue

The work on La Fontaine Tunnel is part of a major renovation project aiming to extend the lifespan of the tube structure and associated infrastructure. Completion remains slated for 2026.

Seasonal Magic Draws Crowds to Beaconsfield's Holiday Celebrations

Beaconsfield, QC — As the holiday season gathers momentum, the community of Beaconsfield has come alive with lights, music and festive cheer, drawing residents from across the region to celebrate together. Each year, Beaconsfield's municipal and community organised events spark seasonal joy — and this year is no exception. On Saturday, December 13, 2025, the town's main holiday celebration, Féerie des fêtes (Holiday Enchantment) transformed Centennial Park into a winter wonderland for families and friends.

Festivities, Warmth and Community Spirit

Residents bundled up against the cold, but spirits were high as they enjoyed an afternoon of holiday-themed activities:

- A performance by the choir Acappella Sounds set a festive tone with carols and seasonal songs.
- Children — and the young at heart — could craft, play games, write letters to Santa and even "mail" them via a special elf run post.
- For the adults: hot chocolate, cookies, socializing, and a welcoming



Families and residents will surely gather in Beaconsfield, QC, to enjoy festive lights, music, and holiday activities during the town's annual Seasonal Magic celebration.

community atmosphere that turned the park into a gathering place.

In case of poor weather, festivities were moved indoors to the town's library — a sign that organizers were committed to making the holiday spirit accessible to all.

Local Markets & Holiday Shopping

In addition to the park celebration, Beaconsfield has hosted

several holiday market style events. Earlier in the season, the Marché des Fêtes 2025 at 424 Boulevard Beaconsfield offered residents a chance to shop crafts, enjoy food, and participate in family friendly activities.

Events like these emphasize the importance of supporting local artisans and local businesses — while

SeePage 17 Seasonal Magic

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ONTARIO

Filipino-Canadian Community News

Tony A. San Juan, OCT

Fil-Can Commerce Chamber Conducts Officers Induction and Christmas Gala

A memorable evening of goodness, glee, and glamour descended upon a beautifully decorated and brightly lit ballroom in Southwest Scarborough, Toronto, Ontario, on November 22, 2025. Significantly, it was the occasion of a prominent association having celebrated an event worthy of notable mention, unabashed pride and praise among the hosts, sponsors and guests who came in formal outfits.

the Honourable Kristine Leilani R. Salle, the Philippine Consul General in Toronto and the event's Guest of Honour and Speaker, after congratulating the newly inducted officers, stated that: "We look forward to working more closely with the PCCT in taking concrete steps towards further strengthening the trade investments between the Philippines and Canada".

The Member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre & Don Valley East,



Group photo of officers and guests provided by Von Canton.

Truly, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce-Toronto (PCCT) recently held its "Christmas Gala and Induction Night" at QSIS Banquet Hall, Scarborough. With the theme "Honouring Business Excellence and Commitment," the executive officers, board directors, and members of the premier business organisation in Ontario's Filipino Canadian community successfully delivered an enjoyable evening programme of social engagement, wonderful entertainment, business networking and fellowship.

Admirably and ably hosted by Kristiane Pascual and Gizele Mirasol, the 6-hour affair opened with the singing of the national anthems, the reading of Land acknowledgement by Aldrin Nikko Aguilar and the public introduction of the PCCT Executive Officers led by President Nestor Von Canton and proudly followed by the members of the Board of Directors.

Formally inducted to a 2-year term by PCG K.L.R. Salle were Von Canton-President, Philip Beloso-VP Government & Trade Relations, Gizele Mirasol-VP Public Relations, Lilac Cana-VP Membership, Mark Gabriel-Secretary, Aldrin Nikko Aguilar-Treasurer, and Rainier San Pascual-Auditor and the Board of Directors composed of Luis Brosas, Prescilla Cantos, Beethoven Crasco, Rommel Lumbao, JB Ramos, Valentina Salas, Lloyd Serrano and Erlene Sylvester.

In his address, the PCCT head honcho stressed that, "we will build a stronger, more vibrant Filipino Canadian business landscape---one rooted in unity, culture and shared purpose". Meanwhile,

Salma Zahid, gave her greetings in person, and also, the MP for Eglinton-Lawrence, Vince Gasparro, the MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, Michelle Cooper and the Philippine Trade Commissioner in Toronto, Mario Tani. Among those who provided written messages were Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga, Philippine Consul General in Toronto Kristine Leilani R. Salle, Member of Parliament for Mississauga-Streetsville and Minister Rechie Valdez and MPP Andrea Hazell.

The 21 new PCCT members are Aileen Acosta, Julie Banas, Ben Corpuz, Tomas De Guia, Gary Cesar De Guzman, Poy De Lara, Irene Dominguez, Joseph Franco, Bona Gallano, Maria Quinto, Chris Jovellanos, Jason Jovellanos, Jonathan Macala, Wilson Ngo, Vina Raymundo, Aileen Rendoque, Emilio Reyes, Mayla Reyes, Carmen Shoukralla, Jacqueline Tayag, and Bryan June Valle.

Five Fil-Can community pillars and leaders, namely, Erlinda Insigne, Rafael Nebres, Agnes P. Miranda, Tony A. LuisSan Juan and Monina Lim-Serrano, were honoured with "Lifetime Achievement Awards". Guests were treated earlier to a wine and cheese cocktail reception, and a chicken and beef dinner and wine was served. Cultural and musical entertainment was provided by Fil-Can soprano Lilac Cana, singer Joseph Arevalo and the Hawaiian Pacific Magic Dancers. An on-the-spot participatory Hawaiian moves by the audience game guests was carried out to the crowd's delight. There were lots of

selfies, photo ops, bantering, side talks and table-hopping catch-ups.

One of the main highlights of the celebration was the "Chamber's Connect Series," a Q&A panel interview and business experience sharing participated by Kendall Marin, a business company president, Aleah Longaphie, a senior corporate executive, and Rommel Lumbao, a principal architect & entrepreneur. PCCT VP-Public Relations Gizele Mirasol moderated the highly informative session. Philip Beloso, PCCT VP-Government and Trade Relations, who celebrated his Nth birthday, gave the closing address.

Remitly, GCash and Filipino Centre Toronto Sponsor Community Christmas Event

Two notable money transfer service companies in Canada, Remitly and GCash, in cooperation and collaboration with the Filipino Centre Toronto (FCT), a prominent Filipino Canadian community hub in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ontario, remarkably offered and proudly presented the "Paskuhan sa Komunidad 2025" (Christmas in the Community) on November 23, 2025 (Sunday), from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm., at the FCT Main Hall, Scarborough, Toronto.

Remitly is a USA-based online remittance service that offer global money transfers to over 170 countries while GCash, Remitly's long-time partner, is Philippine based and is recognized in over 200 countries. In Canada, Filipinos and Filipino Canadians can use Remitly to send money to their families and loved ones to the Philippines. Remitly, is registered with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC), in compliance with Canadian financial regulations and anti-money laundering law. In the recent Philippine calamities, Remitly donated, through the Philippine Red Cross, US\$25,000. The Filipino Centre Toronto is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run and community-based

Marking its 35th year, PCCT is a "vibrant and dynamic organisation with a vision to be the voice of the Fil-Can community and a mission to encourage and promote bilateral economic ties between Canada and the Philippines". Presently, it is observed to be on the sustainable threshold of true transformation guided and supported by a forward-thinking, unified and resolute team of youthful leadership, business-focused, and governance-experienced members---purposefully challenged and encouraged to progressively deliver their noble mandate.

conveniently introduced Remitly and GCash's programs and procedures, including how to send money through Remitly, with "No Hidden Fees, Putting Money Back in Your Pocket. Get Fast Deposits, Multi-Layer Security, & Delivery Update Texts, Direct Bank Deposit, Cash Pickup, Mobile Money, and Home Delivery" services.

Guests and attendees from all over the town were treated to FV Foods distinctively Filipino delicacies such as lechon

(roast pork), caldereta (beef stew), pinakbet (sauteed vegetables), lumpia (egg roll), buttered fish, ensaymadas, lugaw (rice porridge), kakanin (native desserts) and beverages. Jacqui's Cakes & Desserts generously offered on-site taro-mixed waffles and ube-flavored hot chocolate drinks.

Remitly prizes galore were raffled and distributed to winning participants, like bags of rice, Remitly's gift bags, and mini bags. Several entertainment numbers were skillfully performed by 3 female singers & 2 male warblers, AIR's Dance Squad, Quartet dancers, FCT Ukulele Ensemble, a party clown, and other community volunteer-performers



Community builder Mario Marasigan explains Remitly's remittance scheme. Photo by JOSE JOEY BAKING, LMC NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER

organization purposefully operating, among other goals, to promote and promulgate the vibrant Filipino culture and traditions in the province.

With over 200 guests and participants coming in and out throughout the day and dressed in the season's colours, the whole-day event afforded a festive atmosphere of an early Christmas celebration in town. Commencing the 7-hour program emceed by singer-host Dong Sabanal, after the opening prayers, Remitly's Marketing Manager-Community, Mary Grace Gauto, gave the opening remarks, and FCT President & CEO, Mary Ann San Juan, delivered her welcome address.

Community builder, Mario Marasigan, together with Dong Sabanal,

Among the Remitly staff and customer reps who helped supervise the festivities were Mary Grace Gauto, Mario Marasigan, Jojo Cafe, Mary Ann Cala-or, Hazel Tugano, Manuel Yuri Gavina and Rose Ami. The FCT Executive Board, led by Mary Ann San Juan, includes Nitz, Rejdik, Tess Lumanlan, Frank Cruzet, Philip Beloso, and Wendy Arena extended event execution tasks and logistics support.

Noticeably, several event participants happily went home, gratefully enjoyed the merry community gathering, and were fully informed and encouraged by Remitly's tagline, "Send money home with peace of mind." Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat!!!

BALITA SA WIKANG Tagalog

Discaya, may “warrant of arrest” na – Pangulong Marcos



Pinipirmahan ni Sarah Discaya ang dokumentong Letter of Authority galing sa National Bureau of Investigation noong hearing ng Blue Ribbon Committee tungkol sa “ghost flood control projects), ika-1 ng Septyembre 2025.*The STAR / Jesse Bustos*

Gemma Garcia - Pilipino Star Ngayon December 19, 2025 | 12:00am Manila, Philippines - Inanunsyo ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na may inilabas nang warrant of arrest ang korte laban kay Sarah Discaya at siyam na iba pang mga pangunahing sangkot sa maanomalyang flood control projects.

Sa kaniyang vlog, sinabi ng Pangulo na may kaugnayan ito sa P96.5 milyong ghost flood control project sa Davao Occidental.

Ayon sa Pangulo, ang mga akusado ay nahaharap sa mga kasong graft at malversation of public funds, na walang katumbas na piyansa o non-

bailable.

Si Discaya ay nasa kustodiya na ng National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) matapos kusang sumuko.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi ng Pangulo na may walong DPWH officials na pawang mga akusado ang naghayag nang sumuko sa mga otoridad.

Tiniyak ng Pangulo na tuluytuloy ang pag-iimbestiga at pagpanagot sa mga taong walang pakundangang lumustay ng pera ng bayan at hindi lamang aniya sila makakasuhan kundi kailangang maibalik ang mga ninakaw nila sa kaban ng bayan.

Pangulong Marcos: Pinas hindi ‘ISIS training hotspot’!

Gemma Garcia - Pilipino Star Ngayon December 18, 2025 12:00am MANILA, Philippines — Pinalagan ng Malakan-yang ang pagsasalarawan sa Pilipinas ng ilang foreign media na isang “ISIS training hotspot” o “terror hotspot”. Ito ay kasunod ng mga ulat na galing dito sa bansa ang mag-amang gunman sa Bondi Beach Massacre sa Australia

bago ang ginawang mass shooting doon kung saan umaabot sa 15 katao ang nasawi.

Sinabi ni Palace Press officer Atty. Claire Castro, na kinontra ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang nasabing mga pahayag at inilarawan na isa itong “misleading characterization” ng Pilipinas bilang ISIS training hotspot.



President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. File photo

Ayon kay Castro, base sa pahayag ng National Security Council (NSC), ay walang balidong ulat o kumpirmasyon na ang mag-amang namaril sa Bondi beach ay nag-training sa Pilipinas.

Sa kabila nito, patuloy aniyang biniberipika ng NSC ang nasabing mga impormasyon bagama’t walang anumang ebidensya ang magtuturo na ang Pilipinas ay ginagamit para sa terrorist training.

Simula aniya noong 2017 Marawi Siege, ay nalansag na ng mga otoridad ang ISIS-affiliated groups sa bansa at sinuportahan rin ito base sa assessments ng United Nations at US

Government.

Sinabi pa ni Castro na inatasan na ni Pangulong Marcos ang Anti-Terrorism Council at iba pang mga otoridad sa bansa na maging mapagmatyag at maging alerto sa paligid laban sa anumang terror activities at patuloy na makipag-ugnayan sa iba pang kaalyadong bansa.

Umapela rin si Marcos sa mga dayuhang mamamahayag na maging mapanuri at responsable sa pagbabalita lalo na kung makakaapekto ang mga impormasyon nila sa integridad at imahe ng Pilipinas.

Mga bagets ipapatapon sa Boystown

Kapag nasangkot sa Simbang Gabi riot MANILA, Philippines — “Magpapasko at magbabagong taon ang mga kabataang mapapatunayang sangkot sa pakikipag-rambulan sa labas ng simbahang pinagdarausan ng Simbang Gabi”.

Ito ang tiniyak ni Manila Department of Social Welfare (MDSW) chief Director Jay Reyes Dela Fuente na sa Boystown sa Marikina City nila ipapatapon ang mga ito.

Ayon kay Dela Fuente sa mga kabataang mahuhuling makikipag-rambulan o lalahok sa riot bago o matapos dumalo sa Simbang Gabi na bukod dadalhin ang mga ito sa Boystown ay papapanagutin din nila ang magulang o guardian nito.

Ito ay batay sa inilabas na Executive Order No. 2 ni Mayor Isko Moreno, magtatalaga sila ng mga tauhan at mga behikulo sa ilang mga simbahang dinadagsa at pinagdarausan ng Simbang Gabi upang

bantayan ang mga kabataan na maaaring gumawa ng hindi tama at nakakaapekto sa pagnonobena ng mga deboto.

Nag-ugat ang pagbabanta ni Dela Fuente matapos ang naganap na rambulan at batuhan ng molotov bomb ng dalawang grupo ng kabataan sa Mabini Bridge sa may Lacson Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila nitong Martes ng madaling araw na sinundan ng riot din noong Miyerkules ng madaling araw sa harap naman ng isang simbahan sa Galangin, Tondo.

Ang dalawang magkahiwalay na insidente ng riot kung saan lumikha pa ng malaking apoy sa lansangan ang ibinatong mga Molotov bomb sa Lacson Avenue habang nakaapekto naman sa mga nagsisimba ang inihagis na smoke bomb ng mga nag-riot sa Tondo.

Galing sa Police Metro Mer Layson - Pang-masa December 19, 2025 | 12:00am



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DECEMBER 2025 PRESS RELEASES

Question to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: The CAQ only partially protects women, says the official opposition

QUÉBEC, November 26, 2025.

While we are seeing that women's safety net is becoming increasingly fragile in Quebec, there has been no increase in funding for services offered by women's shelters in the last three consecutive CAQ budgets, denounces Brigitte B. Garceau, spokesperson for the official opposition on women's issues.

During a two-hour interpellation in the National Assembly, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Robert-Baldwin attempted to raise awareness among the CAQ Minister responsible for the Status of Women about the tragedies experienced by women who encounter shelters that are full and refuse them access to a safe place. Last year alone, there were 10,000 refusals because shelters were full, some at 150% of their capacity.

Adding to this sad reality are wait times of up to six months for access to external services, a situation that Ms. Garceau considers unacceptable. Due to a lack of funding, these shelters are becoming increasingly indebted, and many plans for new places remain on hold. New construction is only catching up, and the economic update presented on this first day of the 12 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women does not include any new funding.

Ms. Garceau also pleaded the case of community workers, who are at their wits' end and expressing their distress at the situation. "Can't the minister hear their calls for help?" she asked. This is not the first time that the Liberal spokesperson has called on the CAQ government to finally provide adequate funding to meet demand and enable women who are victims of violence to rebuild their lives. Unfortunately, the CAQ continues to bury its head in the sand and fails to fulfill its obligations to provide housing and safety to all victims who need it.

"It is completely incomprehensible that the minister responsible for the status of women is so stubbornly refusing to review funding for shelters for women who are victims of violence. How can a society like Quebec tolerate turning away women who come seeking help, leaving them behind and, in many cases, forcing them to return to their violent environments? The CAQ encourages women to leave their violent partners but does not offer them the resources to do so because of lack of funding and administrative red tape."

— Brigitte B. Garceau, Member of Parliament for Robert-Baldwin and Official Opposition Critic for the Status of Women

Monsef Derraji introduces a bill to better protect used car buyers

QUÉBEC, December 4, 2025. —

In order to better protect buyers of used vehicles from private individuals who do not disclose all the necessary information about the vehicle, the official opposition spokesperson for transportation and sustainable mobility, Monsef Derraji, introduced Bill 395, which aims to make it

mandatory to inform the buyer of the rights granted on a vehicle. Thus, the seller of a passenger vehicle would be required to guarantee to the new owner, under penalty of a fine, that the vehicle is free of all liens by providing a verification notice obtained from the SAAQ.

The bill introduced by the Liberal MNA for Nelligan also stipulates that, for any transaction involving the registration or transfer of ownership of a road vehicle, the SAAQ would be required to automatically consult le Registre des droits personnels et réels mobiliers (RDPRM) to determine whether the vehicle is subject to a movable mortgage or any other registration in force. Before completing the transaction, the Crown corporation will inform the new owner. "At a time when fraud is becoming increasingly prevalent in many sectors, it is time to take every possible measure to protect Quebecers. Currently, many consumers purchase used vehicles from private individuals without being informed that the vehicle may have outstanding debts. Our bill will help ensure that buyers can be confident that the vehicle they purchase cannot be seized due to unpaid loans by the previous owner."

— Monsef Derraji, MNA for Nelligan and Official Opposition Critic for Transport and Sustainable Mobility

Opposition Demands Inquiry into Organized Crime's Grip on Quebec Businesses

Parliamentary commission on organized crime's grip on the bar and restaurant industry called for by Liberal Jennifer Maccarone

QUÉBEC, December 4, 2025. —

The official opposition spokesperson on public safety, Jennifer Maccarone, is calling for a parliamentary commission to find solutions to counter the influence of organized crime among Quebec merchants.

The Liberal MNA for Westmount-Saint-Louis deplores the climate of fear and insecurity among both owners and customers, as several establishments have been victims of extortion by criminal groups in recent years. Threats, arson, and shootings are plunging entrepreneurs into a nightmare, according to Ms. Maccarone's request for a mandate.

She denounces the disappearance, since the CAQ came to power, of consultation committees that brought together police officers, industry representatives, and community stakeholders to coordinate prevention and intervention efforts. This lack of coordination now makes businesses more vulnerable and has significant economic impacts throughout Quebec, with business closures, job losses, and insurers pulling out, in addition to psychological distress.

"There is a real culture of fear among business owners, with criminal groups extorting money from them through threats of violence. While the CAQ is slashing the budgets of the Sûreté du Québec and has abolished the consultation committees, entrepreneurs are experiencing unspeakable distress and entire families are traumatized. They feel completely abandoned by the CAQ government, which claims to be the government of law and order. It is urgent that parliamentarians address this issue

to identify concrete courses of action and restore the confidence of those involved in the community."

— Jennifer Maccarone, MNA for Westmount-Saint-Louis and Official Opposition Critic for Public Security

Opposition Warns of Historic Setback in Quebec's Climate Fight

Consultations on GHG reduction targets: Minister Drainville votes against his own government's targets

QUÉBEC, December 5, 2025. —

Despite unanimous support from experts and economic, municipal, environmental, and social stakeholders, who during recent consultations implored the minister to stay the course on his own government's GHG emission reduction targets of 37.5% by 2030, he refused to do so. This is a historic blunder, according to the official opposition spokesperson on climate change, Désirée McGraw. Furthermore, Minister Drainville refused to retain the \$1.8 billion surplus from the Electrification and Climate Change Fund (FECC) so that it could be devoted entirely to its core mission of fighting climate change and decarbonizing Quebec's economy, as recommended by the official opposition.

According to the Liberal MNA for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, the minister's combative attitude and negative comments toward the 26 groups that were consulted throughout the process foreshadowed a setback in the fight against GHGs. The arguments of the experts who came to share their advice and express their concerns were all dismissed by a minister who does not

seem to believe in science, Ms. McGraw said.

Even after the consultations ended, during a working session that was intended to be collaborative, the CAQ members voted against the official opposition's three key recommendations: maintaining GHG reduction targets, establishing priorities for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and ensuring that the FECC remains fully dedicated to its mission. "I don't remember ever seeing an environment minister so insensitive to his own cause. He is the person who should be doing everything possible to protect the environment and fight climate change with all his energy. In the current context, he should be redoubling his efforts to ensure that Quebec maintains its competitive advantage as a world leader in this area. Instead, he is giving up and imposing a historic setback on Quebec. It's a disgrace."

— Désirée McGraw, MNA for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Official Opposition Critic for Climate Change

Source:

Alexandra Robertson | Attachée Politique (Political Attachée), Attachée de presse responsable des médias anglophones, et relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise pour l'opposition officielle

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December 2025 Photo Gallery





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Wishing readers warm holiday greetings and all the best for 2026.

HAPPY
Holidays

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Season's greetings to you and your family. May this time be filled with warmth, laughter and memorable moments to carry into the new year.

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Holiday dinner recipes



Roast Turkey

Equipment
Instant-read digital thermometer.
disposable roasting pan
Large Serving Platter
1 12-20 pound turkey*
1 onion , peeled and quartered
1 lemon , quartered
1 apple (your favorite kind), quartered
.75 ounce container fresh rosemary*
.75 ounce container fresh thyme*
.75 ounce container fresh sage*
For the herb butter:
1 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6-8 cloves garlic , minced
fresh chopped herbs
Instructions
1. If the turkey is frozen: Thaw in the fridge, 24 hours for every 5 pounds of Turkey.
2. Remove the thawed turkey from the fridge 1 hour before roasting, to let it come to room temperature.
3. Adjust your oven rack so the turkey will sit in the center of the oven. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.
4. Make the herb butter by combining room temperature butter, minced garlic, salt, pepper, one tablespoon fresh chopped rosemary, one tablespoon fresh chopped thyme, and half a tablespoon of fresh chopped sage. (You'll use the remaining fresh herbs for stuffing inside the cavity of the turkey)
5.Remove turkey from packaging and remove the neck and giblets from the inside the cavities of the bird. (Reserve them for gravy, if you want, or discard them). Pat the turkey very dry with paper towels.
6. Season the cavity of the turkey with salt and pepper. Stuff it with the quartered lemon, onion and apple and leftover herbs

7. Use your fingers to loosen and lift the skin above the breasts (on the top of the turkey) and smooth a few tablespoons of the herb butter underneath.
8. Tuck the wings of the turkey underneath the turkey and set the turkey on a roasting rack inside a roasting pan*.
9. Microwave the remaining herb butter mixture for 30 seconds (it doesn't need to be completely melted-just really softened). Use a basting brush to brush the remaining herb butter all over the outside of the turkey, legs and wings.
10. Roast at 325 degrees F for about 13-15 minutes per pound, or until internal temperature (inserted on middle of thigh and breast) reaches about 165 degrees. I tent it with foil and let it rest on the counter then move it to a large cutting board inside a sheet pan to catch any extra turkey juices while carving.
11. ***Check the turkey about halfway through cooking, and once the skin gets golden brown, cover the top of the turkey with tinfoil, to protect the breast meat from overcooking. Alternately, you could start cooking the turkey with it tented in foil, then during the last hour or so of cooking you can take the foil off to let the turkey brown.
12. Allow turkey to rest for 20-30 minutes before carving.
13. Reserve any drippings and juice remaining in your roasting pan to make turkey gravy.
Notes
Herbs: to substitute dried herbs, use 1 teaspoon dried herbs per 1 tablespoon fresh chopped herbs.
Tips for covering with tinfoil: Start with the bird uncovered. Once the skin gets golden brown, tent the bird with a large piece of tinfoil. If you have a roasting pan, you can use the lid to the roasting pan instead.



Cola Glazed Ham

Ingredients:
1 pound ham, bone-in recommended (see tips for choosing the right size for you)
¼ cup Coca Cola, plus more as needed*
½ teaspoon smooth dijon mustard
1 Tablespoon packed brown sugar
Instructions
For every pound of ham, plan to use approximately 2 to 4 tablespoons of glaze mixture. A typical guideline is to prepare at least 1 cup of glaze for every 5 to 10 pounds of ham, allowing for a generous coating and basting. The exact amount can vary based on several factors:
Glaze consistency: Thicker glazes may coat more effectively with less volume, while runnier glazes might require more frequent application.
Basting frequency: The more often you baste the ham during the final baking stage (typically every 10-15 minutes), the more glaze you will use.
Personal preference: Some people prefer a heavily caramelized, sweet crust, which requires more glaze, while others prefer a lighter application.
Ham type: Spiral-cut hams have more surface area for the glaze to seep into, potentially using slightly more glaze than a traditional bone-in ham that you score yourself.

is often better to err on the side of making slightly more glaze than you think you'll need, as it can be used for serving alongside the sliced ham.
Instructions.
1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Place a ham largest cut side down inside of a roasting pan with high sides.
2. In a bowl stir together the dijon, brown sugar, and coke. Pour it over the ham and rub the sugar into the ham as best as possible.
3. Cover the roasting pan **TIGHTLY** with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and baste the ham all over with the juices from the pan. Recover, keeping the foil as tight as possible and repeat every 30 minutes until cooked.
4. Remove the foil and baste the ham again. Bake uncovered for 15 minutes to help the glaze get crisp. Take the ham out of the oven and let it rest for 15 minutes before slicing and serving.
Notes
The roasting rack is entirely optional in the roasting pan which helps the ham stay crisper and become roasted instead of baked.

If you choose to do an uncut ham, use a sharp knife to score the fatty top about ¼" deep. Make 3-4 lines going one direction, the criss-cross them with 3-4 lines in the opposite direction, making diamonds in the top. Cook it with the fat side up.
When you pour the glaze over the ham, it won't be fully smooth. The brown sugar will settle in the bottom of the bowl a bit, so just rub what you can into the ham at the beginning. Fully cooked hams cook roughly based on weight; 15 minutes per pound.



Apple Fennel Stuffing

Ingredients:
i1 pound loaf ciabatta bread
8 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
2 leeks, halved and sliced
1 fennel bulb, chopped, fronds reserved for garnish
2 celery stalks, sliced
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cut into small dice
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon fresh chopped thyme
1 tablespoon fresh chopped rosemary
2½ cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 large egg
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
Instructions
1. Heat the oven to 375°F. Cut or tear the bread into bite-sized pieces and place in a single layer on a baking sheet.
/-+2.Bake until toasted and dry, 15–18 minutes. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.
3. In a large skillet, melt 6 tablespoons of butter. Add the leeks, fennel and celery and season generously with salt and pepper. Saute, stirring often until vegetables are translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the apples, garlic, thyme and rosemary and cook for 5 more minutes.
4.Transfer to the bowl with the bread along with the chicken broth, the egg and the parsley and toss to combine. Butter or spray a baking dish with non-stick cooking spray and add the stuffing. Dot the top with the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and cover with aluminum foil. Bake for 45 minutes and remove the foil. Continue baking until the stuffing is set and the top is golden brown, about 45 minutes longer. Garnish with reserved fennel fronds and serve.

NOTES:
Tearing bread instead of cutting it gives you those craggly edges that are so delicious when toasted just right.
If you are so inclined, the addition of Italian sausage or pancetta (fully cooked in a skillet) would be delicious.
You can completely assemble this fennel and apple stuffing recipe the day before. Store, covered, in the refrigerator then bake as directed. If you can't find ciabatta, you can use a French or Italian baguette. Fronds are the wispy edges on fresh fennel.

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Social Tidbits Montreal Community News

Fely Rosales Cariño

Special greetings to you, faithful readers of this social column. Are you enjoying the beautiful, nice, and fluffy snow? While many of us, kababayans, surely miss our tropical weather, we also look forward to the Christmas season. I greet you a very Blessed and a very Merry Christmas. I hope you've been nice and not naughty!

Double Celebration

Right off the bat, on the first day of December 2025, the Federation of Filipino Canadian Association of Quebec (FFCAQ) sponsored a special event for Stephanie Valenzuela to celebrate her birthday and the coming arrival of her baby girl, due to arrive on Christmas day! How incredible that would be. FFCAQ President Minda Mazzone led the invitation and called on friends and the Filipino community. Fresh from her victory as the newly elected Mayor of the Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce/CDN-NDG borough in Montreal (winning by over 6,000 votes), it seems Stephanie has a triple celebration to end the year 2025! This event was held at 6767 CDN, Room 602. Thanks to the efforts of Cristy Hunter and Jane Cayanán who led the singing of Christmas songs and games. Almost everyone brought potluck to share. I especially liked the dinuguan and biko. When you see Stephanie, please congratulate her for her memorable year.

40th Day of Death Memorial

On a more somber note, the following day, December 2, 2025 friends and family gathered to remember the late Julie Parado's 40th day of her death memorial. It was held at the basement of the Filipino Association of Montreal and Suburbs (FAMAS) Center at 4708 Van Horne, Montreal. Angie Ojerio (Minda Mazzone's sister and former FAMAS President) organized the food arrangement while Josefa Nicolas led the prayers. Offering prayers were also given by Marlene Birao, Au Osdon, and other friends. Again, it was a potluck event with lots of food. Since the place was filled to capacity, one can just imagine the atmosphere, almost standing room only. I'm sure many were grateful as there was plenty of takeaway food.

Dancing Christmas Party

On December 6, 2025, the Filipino-Canadian Association of West Island and Suburbs (FCAWI) gathered in droves at St. Thomas à Becket Parish on 4320 St. Anne's Street, Pierrefonds. There was hardly a space at the church parking lot; many went for the (possibly) first Christmas event of the season. Lorna Mangaser, FCAWI President and her Executive Board were already receiving potluck donations from officers and members. In the meantime, dancing already started! Halfway through the evening, MP Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds-Dollard) delivered his

holiday greetings to the group.

With supper done, the audience continued dancing. Famous local dance guru Nola Manuel led most of them. Easily the best dancing pair of the evening were Pros & wife Gloria Martinez. Most of the time they were on the floor, waiting for the next music to start. Keen dancers with a graceful style, they savored the beat and the festive vibe of the evening. Another enthusiastic pair were Ador Bulosan & wife. Ador would burst on to the floor and as the music finished, he'd be at our table enjoying the martini he shared with us. That was a good martini, Ador! So a quick hint, at the next party, find Ador's table and plant yourself there. I say it was a very lively party. The music was nonstop and the dance floor was never empty at any time. Thanks for a job well done, Lorna and your Executive Board!

SWIS Christmas Party

The Seniors of West Island and Suburbs (SWIS) held their Christmas Party on December 7, 2025 at Olympia Reception Hall, 3855 St. Jean Boulevard, DDO. In spite of the very uncooperative weather, we managed to fill the reception hall. Because we are all seniors, the original plan was to start the party early so we could go home earlier. But guess what, it was vintage Filipino time. People came at their own sweet time and many left about midnight. Ok, so Filipinos love to party, seniors or not. The main entertainment of the evening was provided by the SWIS Dancers, with choreographer Nita Advincula. Dressed in green skirts and red blouses and candy cane-decorated hats, they danced to the tune of "It's Christmas time." Making the dance team were Myrna Rocello, Nerie Ajero, Mameng Transfiguration, Lita Bote, Dory Isada, Lolit Odulio, Connie Fabro, and Emy Bayan. As they were presented, they quickly arranged themselves into formation. Their steps were in unison and their graceful moves belied their age. I must say, I was impressed. Those practice sessions at the Coolbrook Chalet on Spring Gardens, DDO paid off handsomely.

Some distinguished guests occupied Table 1: Bhag Wannt (retired federal employee visiting from Ottawa), Pulkit Kantawala, (newly elected District 7 Councillor), Frank Baylis (Chairman, Baylis Medical Technology), and the star of Table 1, our DDO re-elected mayor Alex Boutausci, dapper as ever. Frank Baylis started dancing the Macarena. Then he was joined by Pulkit. Then they were joined by Mayor Alex. The trio tried to 'outdance' each other while laughing, giving the impression they were having a grand ol' time. A star was born? More likely, stars were born: 'the dancing trio!' Last but not least, Mayor Alex gave a very inspiring speech indeed; no one can top that. Many agree with him that

Christmas is a season to be happy and to be kind to others.

SWIS Chairman Lolit Odulio was busy overlooking the whole affair that I didn't see her eat or dance. She was either conferring with her board of officers or entertaining other guests. Seen enjoying the night were ever-graceful dancers Roger & Neri Ajero, Nita Advincula, Connie Fabro, Felix Salazar, Benny & Lita Bote, and Nora Arcalas. Ciony Nueva came in her beautiful party dress. So did Cesa Gladych. It was a nice surprise to see Lisa (a friend I met at the hospital during my physio treatment at St. Anne's Hospital) who danced up a storm, leading many on the floor.

A shout out to those who were diligent in their duties. Edith Valenzuela and Emy Bayan were the Event Chairpersons. Some served at the ticket table and some as ushers/usherettes: Cely Sacdalan, Vangie Salvador, Elvie Maximo, Andy Odulio, Carlito Catuncan and Roger Ajero. Mameng Transfiguration helped with door prizes and raffles. Thanks also goes to Nellie Tioseco who gave the Invocation, and to DJ Bernie. Yours truly served as the evening's emcee, which I enjoy very much. Hope to see you all, beautiful people, same time, same

occasion next year, God willing!

As the year draws to a close, I am reminded of something I read, "Christmas is not your birthday." It was intended to be humorous but it seems there's also a truth in it. Christians say, Jesus is the reason for the season. Christmas bears the name of Christ. While I am mightily distracted thinking of gifts to give to others, I may become inadvertently oblivious to the fact that "For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). And Luke 2:11 reads, "Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord". And remember this all-familiar verse in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let's see, a Counselor, a Savior, everlasting life . . . No wonder 2 Corinthians 9:16 says, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!". And as we recall the story of Joseph and Mary looking for a room in the inn in Bethlehem, may we leave room in our hearts for Jesus to come in today?

Until next issue and God Bless!



Souvenir photo with my cheerful guests at the annual Christmas potluck supper of Gilmore College International - from the left to the right: Cristy Hunter, Arlene Manalo and Marivic Lapitan. They are all loyal supporters of Gilmore's social and educational activities. Thank you for honoring me with your presence and active participation. (Z.F. Kharroubi. Founder & Director-General, Gilmore College International - Photo by Ashley)

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FILIPINO STAR

SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

Aiko Melendez embraces 'peace of mind' as she turns 50



Aiko Melendez

Aiko will be turning 50 years old this December 16.

"As I count the days before turning 50, I find myself embracing one of the greatest gifts life can offer, peace of mind," she wrote.

The celebrity-politician added that she found her peace of mind from the lessons she has learned over the years—describing it as the "storm" she survived.

"Not the kind that comes from having everything figured out, but the kind that grows quietly in your heart after every storm you've survived... every lesson learned... every chapter closed with grace," she explained.

Turning a year older this month, Aiko maintained that she has been choosing what "truly matters" in her life, which is what she considers as the peace that she has found— not the absence of noise.

"It's in protecting your energy. Honoring your boundaries. Loving the people

who love you right. And letting go of anything that no longer nurtures your soul," she continued.

She expressed her gratitude towards her children who have supported her throughout the years and to everyone that understood her.



"As I step into my golden year, I feel nothing but gratitude for my children @andreyllana @jickainmarthana who keep me grounded, my family who holds me together, and the people who see me, understand me, and love me for exactly who I am," she ended.

Friends and fans of the actress shared in the comment section how beautiful she looks like in the photos that she posted. Other netizens greeted her in advance and noticed how she doesn't look like someone who's about to turn 50.

It was earlier this year when Aiko revealed that she had parted ways with her long term partner, Congressman Jay Khonghun, through veteran showbiz columnist and talent manager Ogie Diaz. The former couple had been together for almost eight years before deciding to split, maintaining that it was a mutual decision to separate. ■

Sunshine Garcia shrugs off body-shamers as she proudly enters her 'chubby era'



Sunshine Garcia

Sunshine Garcia is brushing aside body-shaming remarks, telling fans she's confidently enjoying her "chubby era" after giving birth earlier this year.

In an Instagram post, the former Sexbomb Girl addressed comments like "ang taba mo" and "ang bigat ni Shine," saying she's unfazed by the criticism.

She even joked about the timing of their reunion concert. "Ang dami ng taon na payat ako hindi natutuloy ang concert namin, ngayon talaga kung kailan nasa malaman ako," she wrote.

Garcia said she refuses to rush her recovery after her C-section. "Alam ko sa sarili ko na wala pang isang taon ako nanganganak... ayaw ko madaliin yung katawan ko," she said, adding that she's embracing this version of herself while she has it.

"Ngayon lang ako nasasabihan na cute, hayaan nyong cherish ko muna ito."

The Sexbomb Girls staged two nostalgia-filled concerts on December 4 at Araneta Coliseum and December 9 at SM Mall of Asia Arena. ■

Matteo Guidicelli reflects on his 'greatest missions' yet



Actor/businessman Matteo Guidicelli: "As a kid, he would watch "Rambo" movies starring Sylvester Stallone. "It's every little boy's dream growing up. So it was my dream also. When it was offered (training), I couldn't say no, 'Let's do it.' So that's how it happened,"

Matteo Guidicelli's passion for serving the country and penchant for military training have been part of his dreams since childhood.

As a kid, he would watch "Rambo" movies starring Sylvester Stallone. "It's every little boy's dream growing up. So it was my dream also. When it was offered (training), I couldn't say no, 'Let's do it.' So that's how it happened," he told The STAR in an interview during his contract signing with MQuest Ventures, Cignal and One News.

Matteo is a Philippine Army reservist who holds the rank of second lieutenant. He also became the first civilian and celebrity to complete the grueling Scout Ranger orientation course.

At the recent 75th founding anniversary of the Philippine Scout Rangers in Bulacan, he posted photos on social media taken on-site with his "brothers."

"To all the Musang brothers, maraming salamat for your selfless sacrifice, your courage, and your unwavering commitment to fight for and defend our country," he captioned his post, adding how honored, thankful and humbled he is to be part of the brotherhood and to be recognized as a Ranger.

Matteo recalled that after completing Ranger School, he joined the Airborne School and the Intel School, and later, the training for the Presidential Security Group,

which is now known as the Presidential Security Command.

"All these military trainings were incredible for me because not only did I learn about myself but also about our soldiers, what they went through, why they do what they do, and their selfless service for our country," he mused.

Since joining the Army reserve force six years ago, it has been Matteo's mission to tell Filipino stories that haven't been told yet or are rarely documented.

Anchored on that, Matteo's upcoming series of documentary films, which will air on the One News channel next year, will feature stories of Filipino soldiers, as well as Filipino food, culture, traditions — everything and anything Filipino.

The Kapatid actor-host and athlete was joined by MediaQuest Holdings chairman Manny V. Pangilinan, president and chief executive officer Jane Basas, first vice president for Special Projects Sienna Olasso, Viva executives Vicente del Rosario Jr., Valerie del Rosario and Vincent del Rosario, NEWS5 head Patrick Paez, and other key media executives at the contract-signing event.

Matteo shared that his wife, Sarah Geronimo, was just as thrilled about this latest milestone in his career.

"We support each other not just on cam but also behind the cameras where we created our own production studio and music

label so Sarah can own her music, all her content, etc. So that's the goal," beamed Matteo.

On his interest in business, Matteo credited his father as his guiding force and mentor.

"My father came to the Philippines in the '80s and met my mom, and I was born, my sister and my brother," he recalled. "And I think up to today my dad is such a mentor to me in leading by example. He leads a company with many people so I think I always looked up to him on how I'd like to lead my companies, kumbaga.

"I think every day you learn, and you always try to educate yourself. That's why school continues — school of life or

additional schooling. That's very important."

He is still open to acting, given the chance. "If there's something nice that strikes the right note, why not? Our industry is full of promises. So you only believe or you step forward once it's actually there. That's the challenge of show business."

This paper asked him about the greatest mission he has accomplished and what his next mission would be, to which he replied, "My greatest mission is being a husband. My second greatest mission is trying to be a father. God willing." ■

Barbie Imperial hospitalized, shares mental health reminders: 'Always be kind'



Barbie Imperial

Barbie Imperial sparked concern among her fans after she revealed that she was recently hospitalized due to an undisclosed reason.

As seen in the photo she shared on her Instagram Stories, Imperial was wearing a hospital wristband, with her name visible and indicating that she had been admitted through the emergency room.

While she did not disclose the specific reason for her confinement, her succeeding posts focused on mental health awareness and kindness.

Imperial reposted a series of mental health reminders, emphasizing that it is okay not to feel fine all the time, to celebrate even small progress, take breaks when overwhelmed, surround oneself with positive people, be gentle during difficult moments, and focus on things within one's control while letting go of what cannot be changed.

The actress followed the quote with a personal message urging kindness and sensitivity, reminding people to be mindful of the

words they say.

"Be kind. Always be kind. Always choose the words you say to people. You could be standing in front of someone who's really trying their best not to fall apart [smiling emoji]," she wrote. "And take some rest. The world can wait."

The actress has been vocal about prioritizing her well-being recently. During a campaign launch earlier this year, Imperial shared that self-care, particularly her mental health, is her main focus as of the moment.

Imperial's recent posts come amid heightened public attention surrounding her personal life. In recent months, she has been linked to actor Richard Gutierrez after confirming his separation from his wife, actress Sarah Lahbati.

While Imperial and Gutierrez have not publicly detailed the status of their relationship, their appearances together sparked mixed reactions on social media.

Gutierrez earlier denied that Imperial was the reason or a third party in his separation from Lahbati, with whom he shares two sons. ■

Montreal remembers 14 women massacred 36 years ago at Ecole Polytechnique

December 6, 2025 - Montreal officials held a ceremony to mark the 36th anniversary of the Polytechnique massacre today. It was attended by representatives from the three levels of government - namely, Prime Minister Marc Carney, Quebec Premier François Legault, and Montreal Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada.

A total of 14 women were murdered in the anti-feminist attack on Dec. 6, 1989. Their names were: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

Thirteen other people were also injured in the attack perpetrated by Marc Lépine, who took his own life. He had ranted about feminists ruining his life.

The shooting led to tighter gun laws in Canada and greater awareness of violence against women. Dec. 6 is now the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Catherine Bergeron, sister to Geneviève Bergeron and president of the Comité mémoire, opened the ceremony with a speech touching on the necessity of remembering.

"Thirty-six years later, we see the path travelled, but there is still so much to do," she said, later speaking the names of Quebec women and girls who were killed this year.

"The duty of remembrance is still as relevant as ever," she said.

Benjamin Shingler · CBC News · Posted: Dec 18, 2025 9:59 AM

With his wife and daughter by his side, Pablo Rodriguez formally announced his resignation as leader of the Quebec Liberal Party.

The resignation comes after a six-month tenure marked by internal discord and allegations of vote-buying by party members during his leadership race. Rodriguez has denied any wrongdoing.

"The past weeks have been difficult," Rodriguez said Thursday. "For me, and more importantly, for my family and my party."

Rodriguez said he leaves the post with his "head held high," adding that he has always conducted himself ethically and with integrity.

But said he had become a distraction and that the focus should now be on the Quebec Liberal Party.

Rodriguez made the comments a day after he resigned in a meeting with his caucus. He took no questions.

What's next for the Quebec Liberals?

His departure leaves the Liberals at a crossroads just 10 months before the next provincial election.

The downfall of the former federal cabinet minister follows weeks of mounting pressure over an alleged vote-buying scheme during his leadership campaign.

Earlier this week, allegations also surfaced that a supporter had issued



Montreal Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada, centre, is overcome with emotion during Saturday's commemoration ceremony. (Christopher Katsarov/The Canadian Press) On the left, Prime Minister Marc Carney and his wife also attended the ceremony.

Bergeron also took a moment to salute Louis Courville, who died a few days ago.

Bergeron said Courville, who was interim director general at Polytechnique when the tragedy unfolded, played a pivotal role in supporting the school community and victims' families in the days and years that followed.

"We can never thank you enough," she said. "You carried on your shoulders our sorrow, our distress and even at times our anger, but you knew that solidarity is always what allows to keep hope alive."

As has been the custom since 2014, with exceptions during the

pandemic, the ceremony was held on Mount Royal with the mayor, the premier and prime minister among those in attendance.

Remembrance comes with responsibility

Fourteen beams of light were lit at around 5:10 p.m., marking the time of the shooting. Snowflakes could be seen falling gently on the ground as the names of the 14 victims were read out by two engineering students.

Last year, on the 35th anniversary, a 15th beam was added in memory of all murdered women — with the initiative repeated this year. Bergeron said the 15th beam was also lighting up the night sky in honour of Courville.

Pablo Rodriguez steps down as Quebec Liberal leader with 'head held high'



Pablo Rodriguez flanked by his wife Roxane, left, and his daughter Beatrice, makes a public statement following his resignation as Quebec Liberal Party leader during a press conference in Montreal on Thursday, Dec. 18, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Christinne Muschi

campaign donation reimbursements. It is alleged that the host of a fundraising event — that Rodriguez attended — handed back \$500 in cash to roughly 20 people who could not afford the entry price, effectively covering their donations.

Such a scheme is illegal under Quebec's election laws. Rodriguez said Thursday that if anyone did anything wrong they should face the consequences.

"The Quebec Liberal Party is bigger than any one of us," he said. "It has weathered storms, it has risen time and time again and it will rise again."

After losing its leader, can

Quebec's Liberal Party recover in time for the 2026 election?

After an emotional goodbye from a leader that only held the job for six months, leaving in the midst of campaign finance scandals, the PLQ must turn the page quickly if it wants to have any hope of forming the next government.

10 months until the election

While Rodriguez has consistently maintained he had no knowledge of these activities and has welcomed a criminal investigation by Quebec's anti-corruption squad (UPAC), the allegations eroded his support within the Liberal ranks.

The next provincial election is

In a statement earlier in the day, Prime Minister Mark Carney paid tribute to the 14 women "whose lives were stolen," saying the massacre was a "reminder of the devastating toll of gender-based violence."

"The horror of December 6, 1989, was an attack on women and the values of equality, dignity, and respect that define who we are as Canadians.

It compels us, year after year, to confront gender-based violence wherever it persists and to match remembrance with responsibility."

Montreal Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada also voiced the need for continued action and vigilance.

"In Montreal, we must continue the fight for equality, equity, and safety for all women and girls," she said in a statement, adding that "women have a right to live without fear and to realize their dreams."

Martinez Ferrada pointed to the importance of ensuring that any gains made are preserved and passed on to future generations.

"We owe it the victims of Polytechnique and to all those we must still protect today," she stated.

Premier François Legault, who spoke to reporters after the ceremony, also brought up the right of women to live their lives without fear. He urged those who witness acts of violence against women to speak out.

"When we know that a woman is being abused, we have to report it," he said.

With files from CBC News, Annabelle Olivier Dec. 6, 2025.

set for October 2026.

Former MNA and political commentator Robert Libman said the next leader will have a difficult task but that "10 months is a long time in politics."

"They are up against a very unpopular [Coalition Avenir Québec] government and a Parti Québécois that is promising a referendum in its first term — something most Quebecers don't appear to want," he said.

In a short social media post, Quebec Premier François Legault said he respects the decision taken by Rodriguez, adding that he hopes the former Quebec Liberal leader will "find peace" moving forward.

Liberal MNA Désirée McGraw and close supporter of Rodriguez called his departure "quite brutal."

"It's the worst side of politics," McGraw said, adding there was no longer a path forward for him as party leader.

She said the next leadership race will have to be done promptly for the upcoming election.

"The stakes are high, as you know, it's going to be the most consequential election in a generation, and we need to be in top shape," McGraw said.

Local father praised after brave rescue from West Island house fire

By John Leo Lete, Local Journalism Initiative

Montréal, QC - Neighbours and community members on Montréal's West Island are rallying around a father who put his own life at risk to save others during a recent apartment fire.

was "tense but hopeful," stressing how touched the community was by the outpouring of support, both moral and practical.

Fire Under Investigation — Reminder of Building Safety Precautions

Authorities are investigating



Paul-Henri Sylvain is hailed as a hero after risking his life to rescue neighbours from a West Island apartment fire, earning the gratitude of the community and local authorities. Photo from his Facebook Page

"Hero Dad" Steps Into Flames to Save Neighbours

According to local media, Paul Henri Sylvain awoke when a blaze broke out in his apartment building on November 15. Instead of evacuating immediately, he chose to make sure his neighbours could get out safely. In the chaos, Sylvain reportedly ran from door to door to alert residents, guiding several to safety before emergency services arrived.

Tragically, in the process, Sylvain suffered serious injuries and was admitted to the hospital, but thanks to his actions, multiple neighbours escaped unharmed.

Community Support Swells as Family and Neighbours Rally

the fire, residents of the building and the broader West Island community have come together in support of Sylvain and his family. Neighbours expressed deep gratitude for his courage, describing him as a "hero" for his selfless decision to put others ahead of himself.

One resident, waiting with family members for news in the hospital waiting room, said the mood

the cause of the fire. The building's management has not yet released a public statement. Meanwhile, neighbours say the incident serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of fire safety and accessible escape routes in multi unit dwellings.

Fire safety experts emphasize maintaining working smoke detectors, ensuring clear exits, and staying alert to signs of smoke or fire — steps that likely helped save lives that night.

Hope for Recovery, Gratitude for a Life Saving Act

Despite the injuries, friends, neighbours and relatives of Paul Henri Sylvain report that he is receiving medical care, and many are calling for a community led support effort to assist his recovery and to help with any expenses or impact caused by the fire. The solidarity shown by the West Island in the form of visits, meals, offers of temporary lodging, and moral support underscores the deep appreciation for his bravery.

As one neighbour put it, "He didn't just save apartments, he saved lives." #

local church on December 19.

More Than an Event: A Community Tradition

For many in Beaconsfield, the holiday celebrations are more than just one off events. They reflect a shared community identity: a commitment to coming together, welcoming neighbours, and creating memories during the coldest, darkest time of the year. As one local guide to holiday events put it — "temps des Fêtes à Beaconsfield" offers activities for all ages, reinforcing community bonds. #

From Page 4 Challenges facing

Valley," and discuss "goods moving corridors" including chokepoints in the rail system.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's virtual meeting with premiers Thursday is his first since last month, which was held before Carney signed the MOU with Alberta that sets the stage for a potential new oil pipeline to the west coast.

The Prime Minister's Office tells CTV News Thursday's agenda will focus on international trade (including the United States, but also free trade agreements more broadly), the domestic economy and the Building Communities Strong Fund.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's office did not respond to a request for comment on Eby's mention of a meeting in the new year, but did share her expectations ahead of Thursday's meeting with the Prime Minister.

A spokesperson for the premier says Smith will be looking for updates on trade discussions with the United States, as well as with China and India, especially around removing agriculture tariffs.

Smith plans to "emphasize the need to ensure Canada's immigration system supports provincial economic priorities," and wants to focus on

"advancing major projects and building infrastructure to enable Canadian products to reach international markets in all directions."

Meanwhile, the PMO says Ontario Premier Doug Ford will be the only premier to attend Thursday's meeting in person, due to his plans to be in Ottawa separate from the first ministers meeting.

Ford said Wednesday his focus will be making sure there's economic certainty, in the face of dealing with U.S. President Donald Trump.

"We have to focus on diversifying our trade with other countries, which we're doing. The prime minister is doing a great job talking to other leaders around the world, making deals with other leaders," Ford said.

His office added on background Ontario would also like to see the federal government move forward on defence procurement, and see more Ontario steel used to build things like pipelines, critical infrastructure, ships and other military equipment.

With files from CTV News' senior political correspondent Mike Le Couteur, and CTV News' Queen's Park bureau chief Siobhan. #

Quebec family doctors voting on new deal after province backtracks on reforms

By The Staff The Canadian Press Posted December 15, 2025

Quebec family doctors have until Friday to vote on a deal that would see the provincial government back down on several controversial reforms in a new law that changes how physicians are paid.

2027, instead offering incentives for doctors to enrol 500,000 new patients by June 2026.

The deal would maintain changes to the method of remuneration for physicians, but it would remove the threat of heavy fines for doctors who take "concerted



People demonstrate against a law that changes how doctors are paid in front of the legislature in Quebec City, Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jacques Boissinot. JQB

The tentative deal would scrap performance-related penalties and a colour-coded system to assess patients' vulnerability, and would provide an additional \$435 million in the compensation package for family doctors.

The province would also abandon its goal of assigning all Quebecers to a health care provider by

actions" to oppose the bill.

The Coalition Avenir Québec government passed Bill 2 in late October and has faced heavy pushback from physicians since then.

The government will amend the law if family doctors vote in favour of the new deal, and it will take effect on Feb. 28. #

From Page 5 Seasonal Magic

offering an alternative to generic holiday shopping.

Music, Lights and Togetherness

Part of what makes Beaconsfield's holiday events special is the sense of togetherness. Whether gathered for music, crafts, or just to enjoy hot drinks in the park, residents of all ages — from toddlers to seniors — joined in. According to municipal announcements, holiday concerts and communal gatherings continue into the month, including a festive concert at a

Cebu reels from successive storms as aid groups rush relief



Jennifer Ellson

When back-to-back typhoons swept across the central Philippines in November, communities in Cebu were still reeling from the powerful 6.9-magnitude earthquake that struck the region in late September. With response systems overstretched, the compounded disasters left widespread destruction and forced hundreds of

swept across the country, exposing displaced communities to further flooding and infrastructure failures. For families in Cebu, many of whom had been sleeping outdoors in makeshift tents due to ongoing aftershocks, the storms created an impossible choice: risk the strong winds outside or remain inside unstable homes at risk of collapse. Schools traditionally used as evacuation centres were also declared structurally unsafe, further limiting shelter options.

The compounded emergencies have resulted in a sharp rise in humanitarian needs — food, safe water, sanitation, shelter, medicine, mental-health support, and livelihood recovery — with local governments struggling to keep pace as assessments continue.

CECI and CONCERN mobilize emergency response

Supported by emergency relief funds from CECI, the organizations are carrying out life-saving interventions for



Residents in Cebu sign up for emergency assistance after the typhoons.

thousands of families from their homes.

The Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI), a Montreal-based international cooperation organization with long-standing work in the Philippines through its inclusive governance-focused Sama-Sama project with local partner CONCERN, quickly shifted from development activities to emergency humanitarian response.

"We are grateful to stand with communities in the Philippines as they recover from the devastating impact of Typhoon Tino and the other disasters," says Nery Ronatay, regional team leader for CECI. "Every act of solidarity helps families rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. We invite all those who can to join this effort and support the urgent response."

Typhoon Tino battered the Visayas region from November 3 to 5, dropping a month's worth of rainfall within hours and bringing winds of up to 165 km/h. The storm triggered severe flooding, landslides, and the collapse of structures already weakened by the earlier quake. More than 230 people were killed and more than 1.9 million people were affected nationwide, with nearly 446,000 taking shelter in evacuation centres.

Days later, Typhoon Uwan

the most vulnerable families, reaching an estimated 20,000 individuals so far. The response includes distributing relief packs containing food, drinking water, and essential hygiene supplies.

"Families were thankful for the relief packs, especially because they had not yet received any assistance despite several rounds of registration by local authorities. Mothers were already planning dinner with the dried fish and cooking oil provided, and many women appreciated the bar soap that would help them do their laundry. These small things make a real difference in their daily lives." - CONCERN, after a distribution to 730 families in Pakna-an, Mandaue City.

Filipino organizations in Canada welcome partnership

With humanitarian needs growing, CECI is reaching beyond its traditional donor base and appealing to Filipino community associations across Canada. In Montreal, the Federation of Filipino Canadian Associations of Quebec (FFCAQ) immediately expressed willingness to collaborate.

"It's always heartbreaking when natural disasters wreak havoc and claim lives. Organizations like CECI are deeply appreciated for the essential support they deliver to affected communities," says FFCAQ vice-

Typhoons devastate Cebu region as Filipino groups in Canada urged to support relief efforts

By Jennifer Ellson



Community members receive relief kits as part of the ongoing humanitarian response.

president Jovy Narvas. "FFCAQ is grateful for the opportunity to assist CECI in their efforts, and we look forward to working with them on upcoming fundraising initiatives."

The Filipino Organization of Concordia University Students (FOCUS) has also voiced support. This year's edition of its annual Christmas event, Pasko: Merry Moments & Malasakit, will raise funds for relief, with proceeds directed to communities in Cebu affected by the recent typhoons.

Filipino groups across Canada already maintain charitable projects in their provinces of origin. CECI hopes to encourage these groups not only to donate, but also to co-host community events, information sessions, and fundraising efforts to support families who urgently need assistance.

How to help

CECI is inviting Filipino Canadians, their associations, and the wider community to contribute to the emergency response, as the needs far exceed the available funds. Donations can be made online at: <https://www.imakeanonline donation.org/ceci/URGENTINO/>

Community groups interested in partnering with CECI or launching joint fundraising efforts may reach out to GinetteM@ceci.ca for coordination and support or learn more about CECI's work at ceci.org.

As the Philippines braces for more severe weather systems this season, and as Cebu continues the long road to recovery, organizations on the ground emphasize that solidarity from abroad — no matter the amount — can provide crucial support to families rebuilding their lives. #



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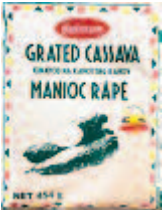
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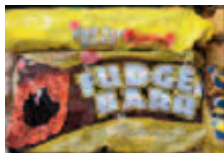
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Happy New Year!**ANJA DHILLON**DÉPUTÉE / MP
Barnard - Carleton - LaSalle
Anja.Dhillon@parl.gc.ca
(514) 639-4497**FAYCAL EL KHOURY**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Laval - Les Bas
Faycal.El-Khoury@parl.gc.ca
(450) 689-4594**CLAUDE GAUTHIER**DÉPUTÉ / MP
LaSalle - Émard - Taschereau
Claude.Gauthier@parl.gc.ca
(514) 363-6800**MR. STÉPHEN GIGUÈRE**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Laurier - Sainte-Marie
Stéphen.Giguere@parl.gc.ca
(514) 523-8139**ANTHONY ROUDATIER**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Mont-Royal / Rosemont
Anthony.Roudatier@parl.gc.ca
(514) 283-0171**Mlle. MÉLANIE JOLY**DÉPUTÉE / MP
Bourke - Carleton
Melanie.Joly@parl.gc.ca
(514) 383-3709**NDLEKEZI JOSEPH**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Langens - Saint-Hubert
Ndlekezi.Joseph@parl.gc.ca
(450) 928-4778**ANNE KOUTOUKIS**DÉPUTÉE / MP
King
Anne.Koutoukis@parl.gc.ca
(450) 973-5660**EMMANUELA LANDO-PAPADOPOULOS**DÉPUTÉE / MP
Saint-Laurier
Emmanuela.Lando-Papadopoulos@parl.gc.ca
(514) 395-4655**PATRICIA LEFEBVRE**DÉPUTÉE / MP
Saint-Léonard - Saint-Michel
Patricia.Lefebvre@parl.gc.ca
(514) 256-4548**CARLOS LOTÃO**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Mary-Alexandre Fortin
Carlos.Lotao@parl.gc.ca
(450) 622-8858**MARIE-GABRIELLE NADEAU**DÉPUTÉE / MP
Nadège - Rivière-du-Port
Marie-Gabrielle.Nadeau@parl.gc.ca
(514) 301-8608**BERVEND-OLIVIER NTINDIM**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Mont-Royal - Saint-Jacques
Bervend-Olivier.Ntindim@parl.gc.ca
(450) 922-7900**ABDOULAYE OUH**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Bourke
Abdoulaye.Ouh@parl.gc.ca
(514) 323-0980**ERIC ST-PIERRE**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Rivière-Mercier
Eric.St-Pierre@parl.gc.ca
(514) 353-5882**SAMEER ZUBERI**DÉPUTÉ / MP
Rivière-Mercier - Saint-Jacques
Sameer.Zuberi@parl.gc.ca
(514) 624-5725